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EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

***"If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed,
but let him glorify God in this matter"***

Just as in the Old Testament of the Bible God's people were called "Israelites", in the New Testament of the Bible His people are called "Christians." At least three times in the New Testament the name Christian appears (in Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16), Christian is not an ordinary name, but it is a glorious name of tremendous qualities. It was a name given to the followers of Christ, not by men but by God Himself. Almost seven centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, Isaiah, the prophet had foretold, as it is mentioned in Isaiah 62:2: "The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name." In the Old Testament of the Bible, in the book of Genesis we read where God had changed the name of Jacob to Israel (Genesis 32:28), whose children or descendants were known as Israelite's. God had chosen this people and had given them a name to accomplish a very special and specific purpose through them, and that was to bring Christ, the Saviour of the world on earth through them. It was to this people Isaiah was writing in Isaiah 62:2 that in future God's people will be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord will name.

After the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, and His subsequent death, burial and resurrection, when His Gospel began to be preached and Christ had, according to His promise

established His church, His disciples or followers were called Christians first time in Antioch. (Acts 11:26) Since the prophet had said, the Lord Himself would give this new name to His people, this implies then that the Lord Himself inspired or caused His disciples to identify themselves as Christians. They didn't use any pre-fix before the name Christian, such as Presbyterian Christians or Lutheran Christian or Baptist Christians. They were called Christians, and only Christians.

Speaking of Christians, the Bible at one place says, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9). A follower of Christ, understands that the Bible teaches that a Christian's body is like the temple of God, in which God Himself lives through His word, and therefore he is to conduct himself in such a way that the name of God may not be blasphemed, but instead glorified through his works and speech and conduct. (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19,20). The Christian is exhorted to put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy language out of his mouth (Col. 3:8).

The Christian knows that the Bible teaches that those who live unrighteously, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers and extortioners, will not inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6:9,10; Gal. 5:19-21). The true follower of Christ, the Christian, therefore tries to live a godly life. Because he knows the value of the name Christian. Before pronouncing Christian, one has to utter the name of Christ, after whose name His followers are called. Christ, the Son of God had died on the cross for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3), He shed His precious blood to redeem us (1 Peter 1:18,19), He is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2). The name of Christ is very precious to those who know what He has done for them. Peter, therefore, in his epistle wrote to the followers of Christ. "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other people's matter. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter." (1 Peter 4:15,16). The Christian should not bring suffering upon himself by doing anything wrong, but if he is to suffer for being a Christian, then he should not be ashamed, but rather he should glorify God in this matter. An example of the same is found

in Acts 5:33-42. Instead of being ashamed when he suffers on account of his faith, the Christian has an opportunity to glorify God by his conduct and attitude toward his adversaries.

Why There Is Only One Way To Heaven

J.C. CHOATE

In the religious world we often hear statements like "There are many ways to heaven," "We are all traveling on different roads but we are all trying to go to the same place," and so on. That sounds good on the surface, especially if you don't stop to think about it, but that is certainly foreign to the teaching of the Bible.

The Bible tells us about heaven, and all of the beauties of it, and how it has been prepared for the Lord's people in the world to come. Christ said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3). Therefore, all who believe in Jesus, and all who believe in the heaven that he has prepared, then surely they want to go there. But the question is, how can we go there? Is there only one way to go or are there many ways to go?

Jesus said again, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6). Notice that Jesus is the way, the only way to the Father, and one can go to the Father only by or through Christ. If there were many ways to the Father then Christ would not be the only way.

Jesus pictures himself as the good shepherd, Christians as sheep, and the church as the sheepfold. Now hear what Jesus says about the door: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep." (John 10:7). Jesus goes on to explain, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture." (John 10:9). Then he says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief

and a robber." (John 10:1). In other words, Jesus is saying that he is the door to the sheepfold, the one way into the church and into heaven itself. He then explains that when one does not enter by the door, but tries to climb up some other way, then he is to be considered as a thief and a robber. But what will eventually happen to thieves and robbers? The Apostle Paul tells us that they will not even be able to enter the kingdom of God or church or heaven, that is, unless they repent of their sins and obey God. Of course, one who is trying to go to heaven in some way, other than the way the Lord has given, then that person will be cast into hell.

On another occasion, Jesus said to the people gathered around him, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matthew 7:13,14). Let us notice that Jesus encourages one and all to enter the strait gate. This strait gate represents Christ, the way to enter the church, and through which one passes to go to heaven. He continues by saying that those who enter this strait gate finds themselves on a narrow way that leads to heaven. In this case, there is one gate, and there is one way, and that way only leads to heaven. Who would be on that way? Those who believe in Christ, the ones who have obeyed the Lord, the saved, Christians, members of the Lord's church, those who are godly, righteous and holy, and those who are faithful to Christ. Can we imagine anyone who has done otherwise being upon that strait and narrow way that leads to heaven? Then Christ talks about the other side. He speaks of those who enter the wide gate and travels upon the broad way that leads to destruction. Who would dare do such? The majority, the worldly, and the ungodly. Those who refuse to respect the authority of Christ and reason that they can do it their way. Those on the broad way are the ones who join man-made churches, wear the names of men, worship as they please, and so on. They are the ones who are deceived and then they deceive others. The unfaithful Christian would also be in this group. But where does this road or way lead to? It leads to eternal destruction. Oh yes, many of them will be honest and sincere. They will be very religious, and all of that. But they will be lost because they are on the broad way.

My friends, there may be many roads that lead to a major capital city, but if someone had an agreement with you that you should travel on one road only, then what would happen if you chose another road? I am afraid that you would be in trouble. Likewise, Christ has all power and authority in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18). When we respect that authority, and we follow the instructions that the Lord has given us, then we'll find that it works the same way. We must travel the road the Lord has specified.

Our problem in talking about the way to heaven, is that we want to put it on the level of human reasoning. We reason that if there are many roads to a city, and all of them will take one to that city, then surely the same will be true in spiritual matters. But with the Lord and his way, there is only one. There may appear to be other ways, such as going through the beliefs of men, the churches of men, and so on, but these are not ways to heaven after all. No one can go to heaven through these man made ways and organizations. All we need to do to realize this is just to read our Bibles. Christ said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:9). Again, Christ said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:21-23). There are dozens and dozens of other similar statements to be found through out the scriptures. Now do we think for one minute that we can disobey God, go on and do things our way, join man-made churches, wear man-made names, worship as we choose, and travel on whatever way we want to travel on, but at the same time still go to heaven? If we are thinking things like that, then we are certainly mistaken. Look at Saul. He was a very religious man. He was zealous for his religion. He had a good conscience, even though he persecuted the Lord's church. But he found out that he was wrong. It was only when he repented of his sins, and obeyed the Lord, that he was saved. Acts 9 and 22. But what about Cornelius and his household? They were good people. They gave alms to the poor and prayed often to the God in heaven.

Yet, they were commanded, after hearing Peter preach, to be baptized so that they might be saved. (Acts 10). There are also many other examples in the scriptures that would support the fact that there is but one way to heaven.

My friends, think about this. The Bible teaches that there is but one God, one Lord or Saviour, one Holy Spirit, one body or church, one faith, one baptism, and one hope. (Ephesians 4: 1-6). The Bible tells us that there is but one gospel, or one way to be saved. The Lord is the saviour and he has commanded one and all to do the same thing to be saved. All are commanded to hear him (Matthew 17:5), to believe in him (John 8:24), to repent of their sins (Luke 13:3), to confess Christ as the Son of God (Matthew 10:32), and to be baptized for the remission of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Christ has commanded that the same gospel should be preached to the whole world, and even to every creature in all the world. (Mark 16:15,16). Then the Lord adds all the saved to the same church, his church, the one that he built, the one he died for, the one he purchased with his own blood, the one he is head of, and the one he will come back for one day. (Acts 2:47; Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 5; Acts 20:28). The Bible teaches that God wants all to worship him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24). Therefore, all are to meet on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper, to study God's word, to pray, to give of their means, and to sing praises to God. (Acts 20:7; 2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19). God wants all of his people to do all in the name of Christ (Colossians 3: 17), and that means that all are to wear the name of Christ (Acts 11:26), and all are to live the faithful Christian life. (Revelation 2:10).

Listen, there is one Bible for all of us to read, to believe, and to obey. There is but one heaven to go to, if we will obey the Lord and remain faithful to him, and there is but one hell for the sinner and the unfaithful. (Matthew 25:46).

Now, if all of the foregoing is true, and you can read and study the scripture for yourself, and see for yourself, then how can there be more than one way to heaven? Yes, there is a way to heaven, but there is only one way, and that is the Lord's way. We would be wise to accept that way and do what the Lord wants us to do that we might travel on that way that leads to heaven. We can go in no other way. The wise man said, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways

of death." (Proverbs 14:12).

On what road are you traveling? The broad way or the narrow way? The way that leads to destruction or the way that leads to heaven? You can't travel on both roads at the same time. Christ said no man can serve two masters, (Matthew 6:24). He said that we are either with him or against him. (Matthew 12:30). It is therefore left to each one to decide which way he will take. We plead with you to choose Christ and the way to heaven.

NOAH

HANS J. DEDERSCHECK

Noah is one of the outstanding personalities of Genesis. His faith and works show his devotion to God, although he lived in a world of godlessness and evil. Unrighteousness had grown to such proportions that we are told *"...the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"* (Genesis 6:5).

Noah must have been a lonely man since no one shared his faith except his family. He was divinely instructed with regard to God's purpose to punish and cleanse the world. Right here we see Noah's sincere faith demonstrated in obedience. The Lord told him to build a great ship with the dimensions of a modern ocean vessel, to save himself and his household from the flood that would come upon the earth.

But this case of divine judgment is also related to God's plan of redemption. The flood of Noah's days is not simply a divine punishment — it is a demonstration of God's saving grace to the obedient. These events regarding the flood are powerfully related, along with God's plan to redeem posterity, and to fulfill the promises given to the generations before Noah.

Adam and Eve had been required to act under moral conditions of obedience. Their conduct came under condemnation. And in the intervening time leading up to Noah's day, human beings had fallen even more deeply into sin, such sin that the Lord had no choice but to destroy them. God promised, however, to save the obedient, righteous souls among mankind. Out of all the population, how many were acceptable? Only eight!

Noah was a man of righteousness, a man of faith. He must have been the laughing-stock of that godless people during the period of 120 years while he was building the ark. The apostle Peter says that Noah preached righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), and faithfully declared the coming doom.

What was special in Noah's life? His faith. He lived alone in a wicked world. He showed his faith by obeying God's Word. Would you think it was easy to accept such a requirement of the Lord, to build a ship (ark) of such tremendous measurements, in spite of the fact that there is no indication he was near a large body of water, or that there had ever been rain, much less a flood? The voice of God speaking to Noah regarding a universal flood to destroy all flesh must not have been easy to believe. But for Noah, a man of faith, there was no problem. We may learn an excellent lesson from him: Christians can survive and bring forth good fruits for God in a world that is very similar to Noah's world.

"And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my beloved Son: hear him'" (Luke 9:35). "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of righteousness which is by faith " (Hebrews 11:7).

"And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:26,27).

Remember the Parchments

T. PIERCE BROWN

Near the close of his life, Paul gives Timothy some interesting instructions in 2 Timothy 4:13. He says, "*When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments* " (NIV). The KJV says "books", but since the books of which he speaks were doubtless scrolls, we use the NIV in this case. Of course we do not know what books or parchments these were, but the fact suggests some worthwhile thoughts.

Some have assumed that since Paul was at the end of his life, he could not want these for his own use. Clarke says, "The books and parchments now sent for could not be for the apostle's own use, as he was now on the eve of his martyrdom. He had probably intended to bequeath them to the faithful, that they might be preserved for the use of the church." However, this is merely an assumption, for no matter how short Paul's remaining time might be, if he ever needed books and parchments, he may have wanted them now.

Our point in this article is that although Paul was inspired, there is no indication that his inspiration gave him information that he might have obtained in other ways. For example, an Athenian poet said, "*We are also his offspring*" (Acts 17:28). This was recorded by inspiration, but there is no reason to assume it was revealed by inspiration. There is little doubt that Paul as an educated man had read the Athenian poets. He also had apparently read the Cretan prophets (Titus 1:12) and did not need inspiration to reveal that they had said, "The Cretans are always liars".

So whether Paul wanted these books and parchments for his own use or to have them to pass on to others when he had departed, it seems apparent that he had taken them with him before and found them useful. If an inspired man as learned as Paul found that it was useful to have books and parchments, we should realize that we need to have knowledge as broad and deep as we are capable of handling, that we might better proclaim God's Word. We should try to have access to as many good books as our intellect can properly use.

Even if the parchments contained only Paul's own writings, or letters that he may have received from friends or churches, we still have the same lessons. Those things were very precious to him, and such should be precious to us, whether for our own use, or to pass on to friends when we are gone. While each one of us should recognize that the Bible is the only book we need to find out what God wants us to do to be saved and live in a way that is pleasing to Him, we should not be either arrogant or stupid enough to think that nothing but inspired writing is of any value to us.

We should never substitute the learned opinions of man for God's Word, but not every jewel of value is a diamond. A pearl or a ruby may also have its proper place.

The Prophecies of Isaiah

TODD O'DONNELL

According to the very first verse of Isaiah, we can know when this man of God was prophesying: during the reigns of the kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah. From historical records we find that these kings ruled from about 740 B.C. till 700 B.C. These facts are significant to the book of Isaiah because many of the predictions that he made (by inspiration of God) would be fulfilled hundreds of years later. There are 35 Messianic prophecies in the book of Isaiah alone, and a total of over 300 concerning the Messiah throughout the Bible.

We want to look at a handful of Isaiah's prophecies and trace their fulfillment in the New Testament. The importance of this study is seen when we read 2 Timothy 3:16,17, where the Bible claims to be inspired by God. If Isaiah had been only an ordinary human being, there is no way he could have so accurately predicted so many things. The explanation for his ability to foretell future events is clearly understood in light of Biblical inspiration. God was the mind behind Isaiah's writings and prophecies.

Isaiah 2:2-4: *"In the last days."* This has reference to the Christian or New Testament age (Acts 2:17; 2 Peter 3:3). The "mountain" has reference to the church in which all nations (Jew and Gentile) would become one people (Ephesians 2:11-16). The Word would go forth from Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). Now look at Luke 24:46,47. Jesus shows that Isaiah 2:2-4 was to be fulfilled when the church was established. Take special note: *"Thus it is written..."* The events of verse 47 were written by Isaiah the prophet in Isaiah 2:2-4 and were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the church was established and the Gospel went forth from Jerusalem.

Isaiah 7:14: This is one of the most famous prophecies by Isaiah. *"Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel."* The fulfillment is seen in (Matthew 1:22,23). How could Isaiah have known that a virgin would give birth, that the child would be a boy, and that he would be called Immanuel, which means "God with us"? These things took place around 700 years later, so either Isaiah was good at

guessing things, or he had some help from God. Obviously, he was inspired by God to write what he wrote.

Isaiah 52:13; 53:12: Christ was rejected by the Jews (Matthew 27:17-22). He took our sins upon Himself (1 Corinthians 15:3). He was scourged. He was put on the cross, and He was pierced. He kept silent before His accusers (Matthew 26:63). His grave was assigned with criminals because He was accused of being a criminal. He was with a rich man in His death in that He had an honorable burial (Matthew 27:57-61). He became a mediator for us (1 Timothy 2:5,6).

There is even more in this chapter that I have not brought out in this short study. But again, how was Isaiah so accurate in all that he said? It is unreasonable to conclude that he just guessed!

These are but a few of the prophecies found in the book of Isaiah. There are others that do not refer to Christ, but have reference to the rise and fall of nations, such as Babylon in chapter 13. It can only build up our faith to study these prophecies and realize that we serve a mighty God Who has revealed His will to us.

But They Paid No Heed

LOY MITCHELL

Who was Manasseh and who were his people? Manasseh was king of Judah and his people were his subjects, the people of Judah. He ruled in Jerusalem for fifty-five years and did *"what was wrong in the eyes of the Lord"* (verses 1, 2).

Did the Lord have regard for this man and the people? Yes, He did. That is why He spoke to them. God wanted them to do His will. He had the desire that they be faithful servants of His. However, they paid no heed. They followed the abominable practices of the nations God had dispossessed. Manasseh erected altars to Balaam and worshipped the *"host of Heaven"* leading the people of Judah away from faith in the true God.

Did God punish Manasseh? Yes, He did. *"So the Lord brought against them the commanders of the army of the king of*

Assyria, they captured Manasseh with spiked weapons, and bound him with fetters, and brought him to Babylon " (verse 11). Sin has a penalty, and this man and his nation suffered.

Did Manasseh repent? Yes, He did. *"In his distress he prayed to the Lord his God and sought to placate Him, and made his humble submission before the God of his fathers"* (verse 12).

Did God forgive him? Yes, He did. *"He prayed and God accepted his petition and heard his supplication. He brought him back to Jerusalem and restored him to the throne; and thus Manasseh learned that the Lord was God"* (verse 13).

Let us learn from this tragic story. Let us see the consequences of the sin in Manasseh's life, and determine to follow God's laws. Let us heed daily the Word of the Lord. Let Him speak to you as you read, study, and meditate upon that Word. Then do what he commands! When you find you have fallen, **repent! Pray!** God does forgive and restore. Let us do His will today.

Pride

CHARLES HODGE

God and pride do not mix. God will have nothing to do with a proud church or a proud member (Psalms 5:5; 101:5; Proverbs 11:2; 16:5; Isaiah 14:12-15; 2 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Timothy 3:6; James 4:6-7; 1 John 2:16-17). The ultimate problem in life is about self. Sophisticated pride is haughtiness; self-congratulation is conceit; self-recognition is arrogance; self-praise is boastfulness. But what we hate in others, we are blind to in ourselves. Pride is the sin seldom confused. We deny it, lie about it, and are insulted when accused of it. However, pride is not just an exaggerated opinion of ourselves—that is vanity. Pride is far worse. It means to "play God," demanding "to be God." It is "my will be done" not "Thy will be done." Pride makes jerks out of us. Pride is a fearful thing, the great destroyer. Pride sets man against God and God against man. It is the great sin, the idolatry of self. Pride ruins everything it touches. Paul's thorn was given by God to allow Paul to handle pride (2 Corinthians 12:1-11). A preacher once asked his wife how many great preachers existed. Her answer? "One

less than you think." Education is good, but don't let it make a fool of you! Paul was more converted to Jesus than to Gamaliel.

GOOD IN PRIDE

Man must have self-respect. If he cannot respect himself, he cannot respect others and others cannot respect him either. We should be proud of our mates, our parents, our children. We can be proud of a job well done. We must be proud to be Christians (Romans 1:16-17). We are not to think too highly of ourselves (12:3); neither are we to think too little. This is pride masquerading as humility. Some are proud they are not proud. This is "reverse pride." Paul got close to this in being the last, the least apostle (1 Corinthians 15:9-10; Ephesians 3:8). God's grace saved him from that.

SIN IN PRIDE

God called Jews to be His instruments, His servants. They thought they were superior. The Jews had a hard time with grace. Peter could accept grace; Judas could not. This was their difference. Judean Jews looked down on Galilean Jews. They rejected Jesus from pride (John 7:41-53). To the Jew, Jesus was a nobody from nowhere. At the very time they were under Rome, they denied ever being under another's rule.

The worst pride is religious pride. Jesus clobbered this in Luke 18:9-14 with the Pharisee and the Publican. Pride destroyed King Saul and crippled Hezekiah. Paul was troubled with the "chiefest apostles" (2 Corinthians 11:5-14 KJV). The temptation of pride will never go away. Little men cannot handle big things; they cannot handle even little things. Little men with pride stymie church works and growth. Judas represents what pride can do to sinners.

Pride is the cause of "Jewish-Gentile" division. The ground is level at the cross. Even Peter got caught up in it (Galatians 2:9-21). Barnabas, too! Pride is dangerous. Inverted pride can even cause us to say, "I am more spiritual than you." Pride keeps sinners from being baptized. Pride keeps apostates from returning. Beware of pride. It is insidious! It can be nearly invisible. It has been said, "The hardest instrument to play is second fiddle!"

THE TOWEL

Jesus said the answer to pride was a towel (John 13). Men have never been good at using towels. After three years of

concentrated teaching, the apostles were still pushing and shoving for the chief seats. If Jesus was not angry, He was disgusted. Without a word, He washed feet. On cue, Peter whipped out his "no, never" sermon. Without mercy, Jesus cut him to the ground. Christian lives / churches are built only with towels.

All of us desire to do a "spectacular" for God. This dies hard. God only wants us to be obedient, to be faithful. The opposite of pride is gratitude; gratitude is the mother of humility. Come to the cross. Christ will meet us there.

Who You Are and Who You Represent

JAMES HAYES

When I was growing up, my dad constantly said, "Remember who you are and who you represent." Whether I was going to a friend's house, to school or to church, he always whispered that sage advice just as I was about to leave. He never explained what it meant, and he didn't interrogate me when I got home as to whether I had lived up to his instructions. But the older I got, the more I understood the value of that powerful message.

When Dad said, "Remember who you are," I'm quite sure he didn't think I would actually forget my name. He wanted me to remember *all* that I was—what I believed in, what I stood for, what my appearance said about me, etc. In other words, every moment mattered.

The decisions we make each day add another layer to our total character. Our name will be honored or sullied based on how we represent ourselves in daily living. All people should desire a good, wholesome reputation. If we remember who we are, other people will trust us, love us, and desire our companionship. Remember who you are.

When Dad said, "and who you represent," he understood that I was not a member of a wealthy family. He wanted me to remember that I had a last name—Hayes—and that there were five other people in our house with the same last name. Those five people didn't want me to involve myself in something that

would cause someone to say, "Well, did you hear what the Hayes boy said? I thought his momma and daddy raised him better than that!" Dad knew that my actions affected everyone in the family. My reputation was our reputation. Dad knew that if we lost all of our worldly possessions the only thing of value we would have left would be our good name. "A good name is more desirable than great riches, to be esteemed is better than silver or gold" (Proverbs 22:1).

As Christians we wear the name of our Lord. Lost, worldly, secular people should see Christ in us every day. We know Him; therefore, we should live Him. Remember who you are and who you represent.

Devotion to Duty

JOHNNY RAMSEY

There is no substitute for basic purity and righteousness. Holiness is the reflection of our determination to be like God! *'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory'* (Isa. 6:3). Ardent Christians reflect the glory of the Lord in lives of spiritual beauty.

Following the highway of holiness will make us seem odd to others. People may even think we have *"been with Jesus"* (Acts 4:13). Being on the cutting edge hurts, as one declared. However, such a result was a blessing to Joseph, Joshua, Samuel and Jeremiah. It is a joy to stand up for Jesus and stand out in a crowded and wicked world. In 1 Pet. 2:9-12, we find ample material to prove that Christians are different and can be influential in the midst of a decadent world. Sacred and holy should be the bulwark of God's people. *"Jehovah will give strength unto his people; Jehovah will bless his people with peace"* (Psa. 29:11).

The converse of holiness is vulgarity, carnality and sensual behavior. Do those words remind you of movies, television and modern music? We are on the brink of ruin and spiritual suicide ala the Roman Empire of yesteryear. It will take deep resolve to get back to sanity and loyalty to Bible principles. But, by the grace of God, we can do it: *"Jehovah is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; My God, my rock, in whom I will take refuge; my*

shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower" (Psa. 18:2).

A special hymn urges us to have more holiness, purity, gratitude and more faithfulness in order to glorify God. Such godliness will produce the kind of influence that will bless the kingdom of God.

*Children, are you ready,
If your Lord should call today?
Are your garments stained and dirty
By the filth of worldly play?
Or have you kept them spotless
In His service all the way,
As the moments pass so swiftly,
Towards that final Judgment day?*

OUR CALL TO DUTY

When we look back upon our lives, we remember those who made a difference in our days upon the earth. We feel the impact they had upon our conduct and future emphasis. Such people vibrantly changed the course and direction of our decisions. When we can tell such folk *"have been with Jesus"* (Acts 4:13), we deeply want to leave worldly things and follow the path of righteousness. Eternity alone will disclose the rich influence of parents, teachers, preachers and fellow Christians! However, the Bible warns us that *"evil companionships corrupt good morals"* (1 Cor. 15:33). Let us flee such vile entanglements and surround ourselves with those who seek to please God.

Truly, an enemy that may be our fiercest foe is the rather universal burden of care and concern with which we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed. Some of these pessimistic attitudes may never come to fruition, and others fall into the category of matters we cannot change anyway. In 1918, the famous David Lloyd George uttered this penetrating challenge: "What is our task? To make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in." The pristine religion of Christ was so designed for genuine heroes, who are able and willing to demonstrate how folk ought to live and die in the Lord (Rev. 14:13). This, too, is a pertinent part of the true grace of God.

In 1 Pet. 5, we clearly see that withstanding Satan is germane to the gospel era, also. We can only achieve this noble victory

through an ardent, steadfast faith, for the Devil is pernicious, tenacious, diabolical and exceedingly clever—as the apostle Paul reveals in Eph. 6:10-13. But the servants of Jesus Christ have access to the power necessary to resist the Tempter and send him on his way defeated (James 4:7-10). The key point in that passage is absolute humility and thus dependence upon God. In one of Shakespeare's finest passages, we read these words that reflect so many Bible verses: "Lowliness is young ambition's ladder by which he climbs upward, but when he attains the upmost round, he turns his back, looks in the clouds and scorns the very ladders by which he did ascend."

Verily, *"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall"* (Prov. 16:18).

THE LOVE OF GOD

When we consider the benevolent hand of God in the affairs and provisions of mankind, we can see a correlation between the two situations. The love of the Lord and the proper purpose in our lives truly go hand in hand. Sadly, millions never understand this beautiful parallel, and thus they squander their pilgrimage upon the earth and will stand empty-handed in the day of Judgment. Norman Trott wrote these words of sober reflection:

No time for God ...

What fools we are to clutter up our lives

With common things

And leave without heart's gate

The Lord of life—and life itself.

Our God!

One of these days, when we need Him most, we will be bereft of His sublime presence because we shut the Creator out of our daily plans. What an eternal tragedy! In 2 Cor. 5, we read of the brilliant love of God. Notice these six points in the natural outline the Holy Spirit furnished as He directed Paul to write:

HIS LOVE CONSTRAINETH US - v. 14

1. It is Universal - *"He died for all"* (v. 15)
2. It is Transforming - *"New Creature"* (v. 17)
3. It is Reconciling - (v. 18)

4. It is Demanding - (v. 20)
5. It is Unselfish - (v. 21)
6. It is Comforting - (2 Cor. 6:2)

In view of these blessings, we ought to stand amazed at the mercy and grace of our Maker. While we were yet deep in sin, God *"commended his love toward us"* (Rom. 5:8). He laid our iniquities upon His only begotten Son (Isa. 53:6; see also John 3:16). And that same favor is extended in the direction of all the ungrateful folk today. Notice the pathos of this statement of the LORD: *"All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people"* (Rom. 10:21). In spite of all that God has done for us, we blithely go our own way, ignoring Him and His love for us.

GOD WANTS TO SAVE US

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). God wants us to be saved, and if we are not, He is not to blame! *"This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth . . . not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:9). Such goodness should lead us to repentance (Rom. 2:4), but some just will not allow heaven's will to enter their hard hearts (Matt. 23:37). Why would anyone spurn such matchless love?

*In loving kindness Jesus came,
My soul in mercy to reclaim,
And from the depths of sin and shame
Through grace He lifted me.*

Some evidently are confused as to their purpose in living and their preparation for dying. The ancient Egyptian culture taught folk to "use this life to acquire wealth and be ready when resurrected in another realm." In the Persian philosophy, Zoroaster implied that man had very little individual honor because whichever "god" created him caused him to serve or be served, and thus his destiny was set at birth—irrevocably! Five centuries before Christ, a leading teacher commended asceticism to offset growing old, while Zeno of Athens taught the Stoics that "the

highest good is virtue." Sadly, his view of virtue was much like that of Confucius: "Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you." This negative emphasis eliminates active good will toward others. Jesus took care of that with "The Golden Rule" in Matt. 7:12, *"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them."*

Of course, Epicurus told men to "Eat, drink and be merry" because of his mistaken view that man was totally mortal. Some skeptics today morbidly state: "Life is a cruel joke someone has played upon men." To the war monger, we are all just so much "cannon fodder." The evolutionist insists that we are the product of some lower form of life, while many religionists proclaim that each one of us is, "A child of Satan, born in sin, totally depraved." The Bible has a completely different view of these matters, as was expressed in this beautiful hymn;

*I was sinking deep in sin
Far from the peaceful shore,
Very deeply stained within,
Sinking to rise no more . . .
Love lifted me!*

FINDING GOD'S PURPOSE FOR OUR LIVES

When men reject the Bible's account of the creation, and shun God's plan for their lives, they constantly struggle for commitment, dedication and depth in their earthly sojourn. The Bible is right when it says, *"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man"* (Psa. 118:8). The absolute joy of awakening each day to glorify God and to serve others gives genuine substance and meaning to life. The unbeliever has no positive motivation nor real contribution to make toward improving the world. Christianity has within its framework a nobility and grandeur that brings light to a darkened society. *"For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light"* (Psa. 36:9).

The abundant blessings the gospel pours out upon us causes us to praise God for such benevolent kindness. Our lives radiate the beauty of truth to those about us who are overwhelmed with gloom and doom. *"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit"* (Rom. 15:13). How sad it would be to never have found Jesus! To go through life without loyalty to the sovereign

God is just too horrible to contemplate. A brilliant poet helps us to express it in these enthralling words:

*To think of the years spent without Him,
How wasted they were I now see;
For the world is a snare,
And the power of prayer
Is the only way we can be free.
If only I'd found Jesus sooner,
If the past I could only recall;
But how thankful I am
For the blood of the Lamb,
And the fact that I found Him at all!*

When people go through life without ever finding real incentive for living, or a goal to tie to, they must be miserable, confused and without peace. Evangelistic soldiers of the cross of Christ should be alert to introduce them to the Savior. We are on earth to lead men to Christ and the powerful blessings of the kingdom of God. As Jesus came *"to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10), so should we. When those about us see our devotion to duty of our God, and our appreciation for divine things, they will say with the apostle Paul, *"Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift"* (2 Cor. 9:15). May the earth be filled with God's glory because we point mankind to higher and nobler convictions (Num. 14:21).

If we would begin each day acknowledging the tribute the psalmist paid, we would have a head-start on our eternal destiny: *"I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: From whence shall my help come? My help cometh from Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved"* (Psa. 121:1-3). We need never to be confused as to our purpose in life, when Christ is the focus and the reason for our existence!

Prayers in Prison

DAVID THURMAN

Suppose you were in jail and heard that some of your best friends were not getting along. These friends are all Christians,

but problems have come up between them. Being in custody, and a long way off there is little you can do, except pray for them.

These very things happened to one of God's greatest servants, the apostle Paul. He was in custody in Rome, awaiting trial before the emperor. While there, he hears that his good friends in Philippi are having troubles. Their unity seems to be weakening, they have members in that church that are not getting along. The church is worried, and probably wrote to ask what they should do. Before Paul tells them anything about how to handle their problems, he will tell them that he is praying for them.

Given this situation, what would you pray for? Perhaps the problems the church faces would be the first thing? Perhaps you would tell your friends you were praying to be released so you can see them again and straighten things out in Philippi? Notice Paul's prison prayers for his friends in Philippi. *"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God"* (Phil. 1:3-11). Paul's prayer tell us much about he felt and how he acted when problems hurt his friends.

JOY IN JAIL

Paul prays with joy whenever he thinks of his friends back in Philippi. Whatever bad news has come to Paul, he will not stop being joyful at their faith and service in the cause of the gospel. Paul had reason to be discouraged. He was in jail, a long way off and unable to come to help them. They are not behaving right, fussing and bickering. Yet, he doesn't focus on their problems, but on his joy.

Throughout the letter to the Philippians Paul will speak of joy. Clearly, this church had lost its joy. They were not happy in their work and worship. Whatever problems they are facing, the enemy had robbed them of the joy of their salvation and their Lord.

So, the first thing Paul does is take them back to their joy. He does this by mentioning his joy. Paul is not happy being in custody, but he is full of joy at what God is doing. The not so subtle meaning is simple. If Paul can find joy in jail, facing a possible death sentence, then the Christians in Philippi can find joy, in spite of whatever problems they may be facing. Odd as it sounds, when we are having problems, the first place to go is to the joy of our salvation.

JOINED IN SERVICE

Paul reminds them of their past. He speaks of their early service, how God was working in them then and is still working in them now. He reminds them they have been partakers in his ministry since he first met them. He tells them how much joy he receives from knowing how they care for him and are praying for him.

Paul is trying to get the Philippians to refocus their attention. Instead of looking at their problems, he wants them to look at their successes. Instead of thinking of the issues that divide them, he wants them to think of the work that has united them. So, he takes them back to the days when they got along and all they did was help in the spread of the gospel.

JOLTED BACK TO LOVE

Finally, Paul tells them that he is praying that their love will abound. And, that it will, abound in real knowledge and discernment. That is, he wants them to see that loving each other is the smartest, most spiritual thing they can do. Paul never whines about his circumstances. He never complains to them about their immaturity or failings. He simply asks them to go back to loving each other as they should.

If they can recapture their love, they will understand each other better. They will be able to know best how to treat each other, even those with whom they disagree. They will be able to live together in the church without sinning against each other.

When churches fuss, the first thing to go to is the joy. The

second thing is the memory of all the good that has been done. And finally, when churches fuss, love is almost always lost. Real love is the kind of love God has for us. God loves us when we are still in sin (Rom. 5:8). God loves us when we fail to measure up to His holiness. Now, Paul jolts his friends by telling them their love needs to abound, and he hints that love will give them the wisdom they need to overcome their problems.

Having told them of his prayer, Paul wants them to understand some basic things that help Christians get along better. With so much risk to the church in Philippi, Paul wants them to know what God expects of them if they are to live as Jesus would.

PUT THE CHURCH FIRST

When we remember the work that has been done and when we strive to make our love abound, one thing certainly will happen. We will put the needs of the church ahead of our own needs. Too often churches will face problems because one (or more) individuals is putting his or her needs ahead of what is good for the body.

Paul told a church with many problems what the priority should be. Our task is not to get our way, but to build up the body. *"Let all things be done for edification"* (1 Cor. 14:26). We should always put the needs of the church ahead of our own. Never is this more important than when facing church problems.

PUT OTHERS FIRST

This may sound similar to putting the church first. But, it has one main distinction. The church is the whole body that meets in a place. To put the church first, you may have to put others first, even people with whom you disagree. That is what Paul is trying to get the Philippians to understand. The simple solution to church struggles is to give up your rights and put others first.

Later in this letter, Paul will explain to the Philippians how to do just that. *"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others"* (Phil. 2:3-4). Paul wants us to know that our own personal agenda is not as important as meeting the needs of others. We cannot be so sure of ourselves (empty conceit) that we fail to realize others might think or feel differently.

The way to solve problems is to give up your rights in order to meet the needs of those around you, even those that may be mistreating you. In fact, Paul reminds us that it was just this sort of love that caused Jesus to die for unworthy people. *"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross"* (Phil. 2:5-8). Jesus looked at undeserving, sinful people and sacrificed Himself to save them. If we are to be like Him, we must put the needs of others first, even when they don't deserve it.

PUT THE LORD'S WORK FIRST

What is the worst tragedy when Christians don't get along? The work of spreading the good news gets lost in the fuss. When we spend our energy trying to get our way, feelings get hurt. People quit trying, and ministry goes undone. The solution for this is to go back to putting not just the church first, but the work of the Lord.

This is probably why Paul reminded the Philippians of their former efforts to help him and his work to spread the gospel. He wants them to recapture the passion of the Lord's work. When we put teaching and saving souls ahead of our own wants and needs, we are behaving just as Jesus did. He gave up His rights to save people who were wrong. That is still the task of the church.

So, when problems come, go back to work on spreading good news. You will find that God can save souls even when it looks bleak. When you give up your wants in order to share the gospel, God will always reward that, and, those church problems that look so big, will shrink to a manageable size.

TO FIX THE PROBLEM

First, find your joy and rekindle your love. Go back to work doing the basics of sharing and serving God's message with others. Understand that others have opinions and attitudes that are different, and put them first.

